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F.B.I. Director Talks Of Reagan and Inquiry

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 4 — The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, William H. Webster, said today that there was "no indication" that President Reagan failed to tell the truth about the sale of American weapons to Iran and the subsequent diversion of money to Nicaraguan rebel groups.

While noting that he was "not in the position to make categorical statements," Mr. Webster said there was "no indication that it's any different than what the President said."

"I'm just going on that basis," he added.

President Reagan has denied that he had any advance knowledge of the potentially illegal diversion of as much as \$30 million to the rebels, known as contras, from the sale of arms to Iran. Mr. Webster's comments were made at a breakfast meeting with reporters.

Other Developments

There were several other developments in the case, including these:

¶A senior Administration official confirmed that the Justice Department today filed a formal request for appointment of a special prosecutor to study the Iranian arms shipments. It was unclear when a special three-judge panel would select a prosecutor, or independent counsel.

¶President Reagan said he would allow Cabinet officers to decide for themselves whether to invoke the Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination if they are called before Congress to discuss the Iran case. He made the remark in response to a shouted question after Senator Dave Durenberger, the Minnesota Republican who is chairman of the intelligence committee, said he intended to call Cabinet members before his panel.

¶The new national security adviser, Frank C. Carlucci, said he had created a 10-member team of outsiders to determine "what kinds of changes may be appropriate" at the National Security Council.

At his meeting with reporters, Mr. Webster made his first extended public comments on the F.B.I. investigation of the arms sale. He confirmed news reports that he had postponed his retirement because of the highly sensitive inquiry.

While declining to discuss details of the week-old investigation, he said F.B.I. agents would have access to all Administration documents in the case, including highly sensitive files from the Central Intelligence Agency.

He sought to play down news reports indicating strife between the Justice Department and the F.B.I. over the case, saying he did not "really buy into the idea" that the bureau had entered the investigation tardily.

Democratic lawmakers have argued that Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d should have brought the F.B.I. into the case on Nov. 22 or 23, when evidence was uncovered indicating that money had been improperly diverted to the contras. The F.B.I. formally entered the case on Nov. 26.

"We have not found any evidence to date that would suggest that we were handicapped" by the delay, Mr. Webster said.

He said the F.B.I. had no evidence indicating that staff members of the National Security Council had destroyed documents related to the Iran arms investigation before the bureau was brought into the case.

"There's nothing that indicates that during that period of time we lost anything," Mr. Webster said.

In other comments, the F.B.I. director indicated that reports on the bureau's investigation of the case would probably no longer be circulated in the White House.

In the past, he said, the Justice Department has "taken the position that information about an investigation involving the White House ought not to be disseminated at the White House absent some overriding reason."

Some law enforcement officials had voiced concern that senior White House officials who are subjects of the investigation might become privy to details of F.B.I. strategy in the case.

To Decide for Themselves

During a photo session today, President Reagan was asked if he would advise his Cabinet officers to invoke the Fifth Amendment in testimony before Congress about the Iran deal. He replied, "The individuals will have to make that decisions for themselves."

Two of the President's former aides, Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter and Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North, have cited the constitutional privilege against self-incrimination in appearances before the Senate intelligence committee this week.

Asked if he had considered claiming executive privilege to bar Cabinet officers from testifying, Mr. Reagan said he "hadn't given any thought to that." Under executive privilege, advice given to the President is considered private and confidential.